

Behold the Love of the Father

1 John 3:1–24

John begins with a word that calls us to stop, look, and take it in:

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (First John 3:1, NKJV).

That word *behold* means more than a passing glance. It is a summons to pause in wonder. John is saying, *Stop and think about this*. Consider the kind of love it takes for a holy God to adopt sinners and call them His own children. Not servants. Not distant followers. Sons and daughters.

This is not earned love. This is bestowed love—freely given. The Father chose to place His name upon us. He chose to identify Himself with us. That alone should leave us speechless.

John goes on to say that the world does not understand us, because it did not know Him. Our identity has changed, and with it our values, our direction, and our allegiance. That alone puts us out of step with the world.

“Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (First John 3:2, NKJV).

Notice the certainty and the mystery held together. *Now we are children of God*—that is present reality. Yet there is more ahead than we can presently comprehend. Scripture does not give us a detailed description of what we will be like, because human language cannot contain heavenly reality. Paul said that when he was caught up into heaven, he heard things that were impossible to express in human terms (Second Corinthians 12:4). Heaven defies description.

What we do know is enough: we will be like Him. That is the great hope. No more sin, no more weakness, no more corruption. Seeing Jesus as He is will complete the transforming work God has already begun.

“And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (First John 3:3, NKJV).

This hope is not escapism; it is purification. The expectation of seeing Jesus shapes how we live now. If we truly believe we will stand before Him, that belief will affect our priorities, our habits, and our use of time. Hope produces holiness.

Sin, Practice, and Purpose

John now addresses sin with clarity and seriousness.

“Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness” (First John 3:4, NKJV).

The word translated *commits* speaks of ongoing practice, not an isolated failure. John is not describing a believer who stumbles and repents. He is describing a life pattern—an ongoing, unrepentant practice of sin.

“And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin” (First John 3:5, NKJV).

Jesus did not come to manage sin or excuse sin. He came to remove it. There was no sin nature in Him, no inherent corruption, no blemish of any kind. He was the spotless Lamb who shed His blood on the cross to take away our sins. And His resurrection declares that His sacrifice was accepted—that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

“Whoever abides in Him does not practice sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him” (First John 3:6, NKJV).

This statement demands honest self-examination. Abiding in Christ changes direction, not just language. It does not mean sinless perfection, but it does mean sin no longer defines the pattern of life.

John warns us plainly:

“Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous” (First John 3:7, NKJV).

Truth must not be softened to protect false assurance. Righteous living does not earn salvation, but it does reveal a changed nature.

“He who sins is of the devil... For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (First John 3:8, NKJV).

Jesus did not come merely to forgive sin; He came to break its power. The gospel offers transformation, not mere reformation.

The New Birth and a New Nature

“Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him” (First John 3:9, NKJV).

The Christian life is not behavior modification. It is regeneration. We were born once into a fallen nature. We must be born again into a new one. That is why Jesus told Nicodemus, “You must be born again” (John 3:7).

With the new birth comes a new nature. Righteousness becomes natural; sin becomes unnatural. When a believer sins, there is discomfort, conviction, and sorrow—not contentment. A child of God cannot be comfortable living in sin, because it contradicts who they now are.

This is why mere religious reform never works. Only a new nature can produce new life.

Love as the Evidence of Life

“In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest” (First John 3:10, NKJV).

John now gives the identifying mark: righteousness and love.

“For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another” (First John 3:11, NKJV).

Hatred, jealousy, and resentment belong to the old life. Love belongs to the new. Cain hated Abel because Abel's righteousness exposed Cain's darkness. John tells us not to be surprised when the world reacts the same way toward those who walk in the light.

"We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren" (First John 3:14, NKJV).

Love for the people of God is both evidence to the world and assurance to our own hearts.

The Cross: The Measure of Love

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us" (First John 3:16, NKJV).

When Scripture wants to prove God's love, it always points to the cross. Jesus saved us when He shed His blood there. Love is not proven by circumstances, prosperity, or ease. It is proven by sacrifice.

And that love calls for a response:

"And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (First John 3:16, NKJV).

This is not sentimental love. It is costly love. Love that acts.

John makes it practical:

"But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (First John 3:17, NKJV).

Words alone are not enough.

"Let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth" (First John 3:18, NKJV).

Love shows up. Love gives. Love moves toward need.

Assurance, Prayer, and Obedience

Loving in truth brings assurance:

"For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things" (First John 3:20, NKJV).

There are times when our emotions accuse us, but God's verdict stands above our feelings. In Christ there is no condemnation.

"And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (First John 3:22, NKJV).

This is not a promise of selfish indulgence, but of aligned desires. When our lives are surrendered, our prayers reflect God's heart.

And John beautifully simplifies everything:

“And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another” (First John 3:23, NKJV).

Faith and love. That is the essence of the Christian life.

“And by this we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us” (First John 3:24, NKJV).

The indwelling Holy Spirit is God’s witness within us that we belong to Him.

Practical Application for Believers

- Examine your life honestly. Is righteousness your direction, even when you stumble?
- Ask whether love is expressed merely in words or actively in deeds.
- Let the hope of seeing Jesus shape how you live today.

A Challenge for Believers

Do not settle for profession without transformation. Let the love of the Father be perfected in you. Walk in purity. Walk in love. Walk as children of God in a dark world.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

If you are not yet a child of God, hear this clearly: God’s love is offered to you today. Jesus shed His blood on the cross for your sins. He rose again, declaring victory over sin and death. You cannot reform yourself into God’s family—you must be born again.

Turn from sin. Trust Jesus Christ. Believe on His name. Receive the life He offers. And you, too, can be called a child of God.